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2-4,D to be focus of Pasco landfill probe

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Environmental Protection Agency officials were in Pasco Thursday to answer questions about a planned \$100,000 investigation into hazardous wastes buried at Pasco's sanitary landfill.

The Pasco landfill is one of 20,000 sites throughout the nation where hazardous wastes were dumped in the early 1970s. Under federal law, all of those sites are monitored by the EPA, according to Lori Cohen, spokeswoman for EPA Superfund investigations.

Cohen said five areas at the Pasco site will be studied to determine if wastes — mainly the herbicide 2-4,D — have leaked from 5,000, 55-gallon steel drums buried at the site.

She also said some industrial solvents and acid-base chemicals were dumped directly into the sandy soil at the landfill site. However, she said there is

no indication that those solutions have migrated offsite.

Of the five areas under investigation, two are believed to contain barrels of 2-4,D and the other three were used for liquid

EPA. Because of a lack of information at the time, dumping the wastes in sanitary landfills was legal, Cohen said.

Investigators are scheduled to begin drilling test wells to ob-

He said that in the event of leakage, it might be several years before chemicals traveled that distance.

"If there is any migration we want to know about it as soon as possible, not three or four years down the road," he said.

Hafferty said although federal regulations banning the dumping of hazardous wastes were not revised to limit the solvents and herbicides buried at the Pasco site, public pressure forced landfill operators to stop the practice in 1974.

He also said most of the wastes are not water soluble and would likely bond to the soil, making groundwater contamination a remote possibility even if the chemicals leaked from the 55-gallon drums.

Though 2-4,D is deadly to broad-leaf plants, Hafferty said grape vines growing well near the landfill is "a pretty good indication that things are pretty well under control. If you had any 2-4,D in the soil, no way

could you get grape vines to grow," he said.

It is expected to take about three weeks to drill the wells and to take the samples. However, a final report on the investigation will not be completed until December after the samples have been laboratory analyzed.

"We want people to know what is going on, and to understand why we are conducting the investigation," said Cohen.

"If we find any problem that could have an effect on the public health or environment, we will take whatever steps are necessary to correct it," she said.

Hafferty said in the event chemicals are found to be migrating from the landfill, cleanup could cost some \$600,000, based on costs at other hazardous waste sites around the country.

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—Lori Cohen, EPA spokeswoman

dumping of other industrial chemicals that are now considered dangerous.

Between 1972 and 1974, when the wastes were buried, 2-4,D and the other chemicals were classified as industrial wastes rather than hazardous wastes because potential health and environmental dangers had not yet been documented by the

tain soil and groundwater samples near the five burial sites in early July, according to Andy Hafferty, who will head up the landfill investigation team.

Hafferty said one reason the EPA is doing the investigation at this time, is because existing wells used by the landfill operators for monitoring are about 1,000 feet from the burial sites.